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Disarmament, the United States, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Working paper submitted by the United States of America

1. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has long been linked to the issue of disarmament. Disarmament matters were discussed and debated, along with non-proliferation issues, from the earliest days of the United Nations 18-nation Disarmament Committee that eventually produced the NPT. Although in drafting the Treaty, the members of that Committee chose *not* to have it require the achievement of specific disarmament steps — and rejected repeated suggestions that disarmament and non-proliferation be linked as a sort of “package deal” — the NPT nonetheless clearly expresses in its preamble the intention of all States parties to facilitate both nuclear and general disarmament, and in its article VI their commitment to pursue negotiations in good faith relating to those goals. As a result, this is an entirely appropriate subject for each NPT review cycle. Indeed, the negotiating history of the NPT indicates that the five-year review cycle was established with the *expectation* that implementing the objectives of the NPT, including those relating to disarmament, would be discussed therein.

2. The United States welcomes discussion of the subject of disarmament. Open and honest discussion of this subject is particularly important today, in light of the degree to which the United States record on and enduring commitment to the goals expressed in article VI and the preamble to the NPT seems to be so poorly understood by many, and particularly because some have sought to make the ill-founded argument that an alleged lack of progress on nuclear disarmament excuses violations of the non-proliferation obligations of the NPT.

3. The United States has made clear its commitment to nuclear disarmament and to the goal of general and complete disarmament since long before the adoption of the NPT. Indeed, the substantial progress of the United States towards the goals of article VI and the preamble, particularly in recent years, gives it an unsurpassed record in this regard. The United States is justifiably proud of its disarmament-related record, and looks forward to discussing and explaining this record during the current NPT review cycle.



Disarmament and the NPT

4. The NPT discusses disarmament in two key provisions. First, the Treaty's preamble expresses the desire of all States parties to end the nuclear arms race at the earliest possible date, and to ease international tensions and strengthen trust between States in order to facilitate the elimination of nuclear weapons pursuant to a treaty on general and complete disarmament. Second, article VI of the Treaty commits all States parties to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to ending the nuclear arms race at an early date, to nuclear disarmament, and to a treaty on general and complete disarmament. These provisions, as they were intended, make clear that it is the aim of all States parties — nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike — to move towards the ultimate goal of both nuclear and general disarmament.

5. The United States remains committed to the goals of the NPT, and is in full conformity with its article VI obligations. In keeping with the vision of the NPT preamble, the United States is committed to working to develop a world of lessened tensions and strengthened trust in which it will be possible finally to realize the goals of article VI and the preamble. The United States urges all States parties to join it in this endeavour.

6. Meanwhile, the United States has been working to reduce all aspects of its nuclear weapons arsenal — the size of its weapons stockpile, the number of its delivery systems, the size of its nuclear weapons infrastructure, and the amount of fissile material in its nuclear weapons programmes — to levels sufficient to meet its defence needs and those of its allies with as few weapons as possible. The United States is also taking unprecedented steps towards reducing reliance upon nuclear weapons in its defence posture and military doctrine, important steps that are all too often misunderstood or overlooked.

7. Such steps continue to this day. The United States is currently spending many billions of dollars and devoting enormous energies to continuing this progress by:

- Dismantling more nuclear warheads in order to bring the size of its stockpile down to levels unseen since the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower — many years before the NPT came into force;
- Continuing to help its former strategic adversary from the cold war secure and dismantle its own nuclear weapons and fissile material;
- Further reducing the size of the United States weapons infrastructure;
- Further decreasing United States military reliance upon nuclear weapons;
- Developing technologies that will help ensure the ability to meet defence needs with as few nuclear weapons as possible and without nuclear testing;
- Continuing to remove fissile material from United States weapons programmes.

Moreover, the United States is a leader of efforts by the international community to rein in the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the emergence of new regional nuclear arms races, developments that, if unchecked, could fatally undermine hopes for the achievement of the NPT disarmament goals. All of these United States efforts deserve the support of States parties to the NPT.

The United States record

8. The various and extensive steps taken by the United States in these regards are matters of public record, but are nonetheless worth summarizing here. The dramatic United States accomplishments that have taken place to date may be grouped into several basic categories: reducing the size of the nuclear weapons stockpile; eliminating delivery systems; ending the production of fissile material for weapons purposes and removing fissile material from the stockpile; reducing reliance upon nuclear weapons; helping its former cold war adversary make important reductions as well; and building a stable strategic security relationship with Russia in which it may be possible to achieve still further progress, while seeking also to build a world in which eliminating nuclear weapons can realistically be achieved.

9. **Reducing the stockpile:** since the end of the cold war, the United States has made extraordinary progress in reducing the size of its once vast nuclear weapons stockpile. It has, for instance, dismantled more than 13,000 nuclear weapons since 1988. It has dismantled more than 3,000 non-strategic nuclear weapons, and reduced non-strategic weapons deployed in support of NATO in Europe by 90 per cent. In addition, the United States has removed all non-strategic nuclear weapons from surface ships and naval aircraft. It has withdrawn from Europe and retired all nuclear artillery shells, Lance missile warheads, and naval nuclear depth bombs. In 2003, the United States dismantled its very last nuclear artillery shell, the W-79 weapon.

10. It is not merely that the United States cancelled a number of its ongoing warhead programmes upon the end of the cold war, specifically the W-89 and W-91 nuclear warheads and the B-90 nuclear bomb. Dramatic reductions are in fact under way in strategic warhead numbers. The United States is now in the process of drawing down its operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 by the year 2012. The decision made by President George W. Bush in 2001 to do this was reflected in the Moscow Treaty he signed with Russian President Putin in 2002.

11. When this ongoing process of warhead reductions has been completed, the United States will have removed about 80 per cent of the number of strategic nuclear warheads deployed in 1991, leaving the total at about one-third of the United States 2002 level. When this point is reached in 2012, in fact, the number of such weapons will have reached its lowest level since the administration of United States President Dwight Eisenhower.

12. As the United States has reduced the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads, it has also gradually dismantled many of them. In 2004, for instance, the Bush Administration took steps to reduce dramatically the size of the overall United States nuclear stockpile. Warhead dismantlement, a difficult and costly process, is now currently under way, and remains a continuing priority of the United States. For example, the United States dismantled the last W-56 warhead for the Minuteman II intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in June 2006. The Bush Administration, moreover, recently announced that work to dismantle warheads would increase by nearly 50 per cent from fiscal year 2006 to fiscal year 2007.

13. The United States has also decided to go forward with developing the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW), which can facilitate these downward trends. (This work will support a future decision to seek congressional authorization and funding

for this device.) The Reliable Replacement Warhead will not provide any new or improved military capabilities compared to the older warheads it replaces in the United States arsenal. Because of improvements in its reliability, however, coupled with the retention of a responsive infrastructure, the Reliable Replacement Warhead will provide opportunities to reduce further the size of the overall stockpile because the United States will be able to retire and dismantle reserve warheads that are being maintained now to hedge against any possible problem in the stockpile. Moreover, the Reliable Replacement Warhead will help reduce the risk that the United States might at some point need to resume nuclear testing in order to identify or fix a warhead problem. The Reliable Replacement Warhead design also takes advantage of state-of-the-art security technology in order to prevent use by terrorists or criminals, uses insensitive high explosives that are less susceptible to accidental detonation, and uses fewer materials that are harmful to people and the environment.

14. Development of the Reliable Replacement Warhead not only serves United States national security interests, but also advances the goals expressed in the preamble and article VI of the NPT. The Reliable Replacement Warhead will help permit the United States to continue to meet its deterrence needs, and to assure other States parties of the continued viability of United States extended nuclear deterrence, until total nuclear weapons elimination becomes achievable. It will allow the United States to do this, moreover, with safer and fewer warheads. Consequently, the Reliable Replacement Warhead supports and will help advance the disarmament objectives shared by States parties to the NPT. Finally, the United States is undertaking the “Complex 2030” programme, which is designed to reduce significantly the size and complexity of the United States nuclear weapons production infrastructure, consistent with United States requirements for a smaller stockpile in the New Strategic Triad. A smaller infrastructure, yet one which can be highly responsive to potential future national security needs, may enable further reductions in the United States nuclear stockpile by reducing the current need to maintain some warheads in a non-deployed status in order to guard against the emergence of new strategic threats.

15. **Eliminating delivery systems:** in parallel with reductions in warhead numbers, the United States has been reducing its nuclear delivery systems. Since the cold war’s end, the United States has cancelled the modern, highly sophisticated MGM-134 “Midgetman” missile, and halted production of other major weapons systems such as the B-2 “Stealth” bomber. Under President George H. W. Bush, the United States took out of nuclear weapons service four *Ohio*-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines carrying the Trident C-4 submarine-launched ballistic missile, and modified these vessels for other uses. It also removed the B-1 “Lancer” bomber from strategic service. To date, in fact, the United States has eliminated more than 1,000 strategic missiles and bombers, and 450 silos for ICBMs.

16. These reductions have been a continuing priority for the current Bush Administration. The final MX “Peacekeeper” missile — the last of 50 — was deactivated in September 2005, and the United States recently announced that it will eliminate about 400 Advanced Cruise Missiles currently deployed with the B-52 bomber fleet.

17. **Reducing fissile material:** the United States has not enriched uranium for nuclear weapons purposes since 1964 and has produced no plutonium for nuclear weapons since 1988. Since 1992, moreover, it has scrupulously observed a declared

moratorium on nuclear testing and hopes to develop its capabilities to the point where it can be assured that such testing will not be needed. The Reliable Replacement Warhead, mentioned above, has an important role to play in this regard, as do ongoing efforts within the United States Stockpile Stewardship Programme. The Stockpile Stewardship Programme is itself designed to ensure the highest possible standards of safety and reliability in a non-testing environment.

18. The United States is also a staunch advocate of a treaty to ban any further production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive purposes. Indeed, in May 2006, the United States became the first (and so far, the only) nation to introduce a draft fissile material cut-off treaty at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva. Movement towards achieving such a treaty at the CD has been difficult due to the inability to reach consensus on an agreed programme of work. The United States continues to urge CD delegations to help ensure that the Conference promptly begins negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. In addition, the United States continues to call upon all countries publicly to make, and thereafter to adhere to, pledges not to produce fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, as the United States has done, until a treaty is negotiated.

19. While promoting the achievement of a fissile material cut-off treaty, moreover, the United States has also been unilaterally reducing its own stockpile of fissile material. The United States has declared approximately 174 tons of highly enriched uranium and 52 tons of surplus plutonium excess to national security needs, and has placed some of this material under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. In fact, the United States has down-blended over 90 tons of surplus United States highly enriched uranium to low enriched uranium for use in civilian or research reactor fuel. These efforts are ongoing. In November 2005, in fact, the United States announced that it would remove an additional 200 metric tons of highly enriched uranium from use in United States nuclear warheads — enough material, calculating based upon IAEA figures, to make 8,000 nuclear weapons.

20. **Reducing reliance:** the United States is also moving to reduce its reliance upon nuclear weapons in its military doctrine. As announced in the Nuclear Posture Review of 2001, the United States is moving away from the cold war nuclear “Triad” as the cornerstone of its strategic posture. Pursuant to this plan, strategic deterrence no longer relies exclusively upon nuclear weapons. Instead, to maintain and enhance deterrence, the United States relies upon a combination of nuclear and non-nuclear offensive strike capabilities, defences (including ballistic missile defences), and a robust and responsive defence industrial infrastructure.

21. **Helping former adversary:** the United States and Russia have also taken many bilateral steps that support achieving the goals of article VI and the preamble by helping Russia move further away from its cold war nuclear posture. Agreements between the United States and Russia facilitate the shutdown of Russia’s last three plutonium-production reactors by replacing them with fossil fuel plants. Moreover, the United States is providing funding to redirect the efforts of over 60,000 former Soviet nuclear weapons scientists to peaceful commercial work. The United States has also been helping Russia to reduce the size of, and increase security within, its nuclear weapons complex.

22. Through the 1993 United States-Russia Highly Enriched Uranium Purchase Agreement, 500 metric tons of highly enriched uranium from Russia’s military

stocks are to be down-blended to low enriched uranium and sold for commercial use in the United States over 20 years. This effort recently reached its halfway mark with the down-blending of 250 metric tons of this highly enriched uranium. In the spirit of beating swords into ploughshares, this remarkable effort has had the effect of creating a situation in which 10 per cent of the electricity consumed by the United States population is today being generated from weapons-usable fissile material from the former Soviet Union. The United States is also cooperating with Russia on a joint programme to turn 68 metric tons of former nuclear weapons plutonium (34 of them from Russia) into mixed-oxide reactor fuel. Based upon IAEA figures for the amount of fissile material needed to manufacture a nuclear weapon, these various United States-Russian initiatives should account for enough nuclear material to make 24,500 nuclear weapons.

23. **Looking to the future:** finally, the United States and Russia are currently engaged in a broad-ranging strategic security dialogue designed, among other things, to work out the nature of their strategic relationship after the expiration of the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) in 2009. This dialogue began in September 2006 between former Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Robert Joseph and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak. (START I calls for post-START dialogue to begin in December 2008, but the United States and Russia began their discussions more than two years ahead of that deadline.)

24. It is too early in the course of this dialogue to be able to say much about its progress, but the United States has made clear that it hopes to ensure that transparency and confidence-building measures remain an enduring part of the United States-Russia relationship. The United States believes such measures are the most appropriate way to help build and institutionalize a strategic environment that reflects the transition from the cold war to the twenty-first century and abandons the adversarial relationships of the past.

25. Recognizing that the preamble to the NPT discusses the importance of lessening tension and strengthening trust among States in order to facilitate the achievement of disarmament goals, United States officials have also begun to reach out to foreign counterparts in order to engage in discussions about how States parties can work together to create an environment in which achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons could be a realistic possibility. (This subject is discussed in more detail in a companion paper to this document.)

26. Such issues have so far received far too little attention in international diplomatic circles, but any serious effort to achieve disarmament must necessarily involve thoughtful consideration of the means by which the total elimination of nuclear weapons could realistically be achieved and sustained indefinitely. The United States looks forward to such discussions during this NPT review cycle.

Non-proliferation and disarmament

27. This extraordinary progress towards achieving the goals of article VI and the preamble to the NPT has been possible, in large part, due to changes in the nature of the geopolitical relationship between the United States and the States that made up the former Soviet Union. The United States and Russia have ended their period of cold war-era strategic antagonism, and they are now in a new era of non-competitive nuclear postures. These developments illustrate the wisdom of the emphasis in the

preamble upon lessening international tension and strengthening trust between nations in order to make possible further progress leading to nuclear disarmament.

28. These developments also illustrate the point, however, that disarmament progress does not and cannot occur in isolation from broader developments and trends in the world. To its credit, the United States has continued to reduce its nuclear arsenal and reliance upon nuclear weapons to the minimum possible in the current global environment. As noted, it also seeks to build a *new* global environment in which disarmament can become a realistic possibility. And the United States has done all of this notwithstanding serious challenges to the nuclear non-proliferation regime that have arisen as a result of nuclear weapons programmes by non-nuclear-weapon States, including violations of articles II and III, and notwithstanding the danger of new regional nuclear arms races in the Middle East and North-east Asia that could be sparked by the nuclear weapons programmes of Iran and North Korea.

29. But the Treaty's focus upon the role that the overall security environment plays in making disarmament possible — and the clear obligation of all States parties, both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike, to pursue negotiations on effective measures related to ending the nuclear arms race and related to disarmament — makes clear that all States have a role to play in ensuring the continuation of recent progress towards disarmament. And it is clear that stricter compliance with the Treaty's non-proliferation rules is essential if the world hopes to ever achieve the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. Even the achievement of other important goals, such as ensuring that the Middle East becomes a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction or achieving universality for the NPT, will be imperilled if States parties are unable to act together quickly and effectively to rein in the nuclear weapons ambitions of treaty violators such as Iran.

30. It is for this reason, therefore, that States parties should place a very high priority upon working together to meet the challenges of non-proliferation compliance that face the NPT today and present the greatest threat to further progress with regard to both nuclear disarmament and the general and complete disarmament envisioned by the Treaty.

Conclusion

31. Progress towards disarmament has been significant in recent years and has laid a strong foundation for further progress. During this NPT review cycle, States parties to the Treaty should engage in serious dialogue about disarmament goals. They should give full recognition to the progress made to date, and should both recognize and fulfil their roles in creating the environment necessary in order to do more. Such steps will contribute in important ways towards the international community's success in fulfilling the objectives of article VI and achieving the goals expressed in the preamble of the NPT.